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STATE FOR NEA/PI, NEA/ELA AND EUR/NB

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KMPI](#) [SY](#) [DA](#)

SUBJECT: DENMARK SUPPORTS EU STATEMENT ON SYRIAN DETENTIONS

REF: STATE 11025

Classified By: Pol/Econ Counselor Bill Mozdzierz, reasons 1.4b,d

¶1. (C) The Danish government backs French efforts to secure an EU Presidency statement condemning Syrian detention of Riad Seif and other democracy activists, Danish MFA acting Middle East head Steen Norlov told us February 6. Noting that Syrian action followed the recent visit of the Dutch foreign minister to Damascus (whose trip, Norlov said, came as a surprise to many), Norlov characterized Danish engagement with democracy and human rights activists in Syria as a balancing act between demonstrating public support and avoiding exposure of the activists to official retaliation. With Seif and the other Damascus Declaration National Council detainees, Norlov agreed that a forceful public statement can only help.

¶2. (C) Asked about upcoming travel by Danish officials to Syria, Norlov reported that Danish Minister for Development Cooperation Ulla Tornaes plans to travel there February 21-22, but stressed that her mission will be humanitarian, not political, in nature. Tornaes will visit Syria and Jordan to review Danish assistance in support of Iraqi refugees in those countries, Norlov said. He pledged to ensure that Tornaes is fully briefed on the detentions and prepared to raise these cases in the (unlikely, he thought) event that she meets with political leaders while in Damascus.
CAIN